

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2007.09.27.b](#)

DATE: Thursday, September 27, 2007

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Moonstone Beach, Humboldt County, California, USA.

41°01.5'N; 124°06.7'W

NAME: Sue Snyder

DESCRIPTION: Female, clad in a black wetsuit

SURFBOARD: A 9'6" longboard



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a beautiful sunny morning with a full moon setting over the horizon as we surfed. The air temperature was 50°F, estimated.

SEA CONDITIONS: The waves were small, but glassy and clean. The sea temperature was about 50°F, and underwater visibility was approximately two to three feet.

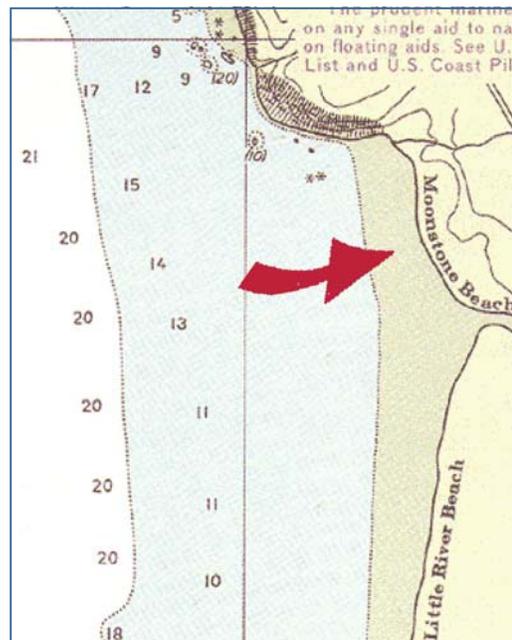
MOON PHASE: Full Moon, September 26, 2007

ENVIRONMENT: There is an open, gently sloping, sandy beach to the south and a rocky shoreline to the north. The sea floor was sandy at the incident site, but there was no deep water channel nor was there any kelp. Pinnipeds frequent this area for its plentiful fish, and the surfers saw one seal prior to the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: Five to 10 feet

TIME: 08h15



NARRATIVE: The surfers had been in the water about 30 minutes. Surfer Scott Payton describes the incident:

“There were nine of us in the water at the time. Seven of us were pretty close together, within a radius of approximately 50 yards, with two others about 100 yards south. After I got off the wave I saw my buddy waving me in to shore. I noticed everyone else was making their way to the beach, riding waves on their stomachs as fast as they could (never a good sign). At this point, I knew something was up, but we experience lots of false alarms in our area. Sue was the last to reach the beach, and everyone congregated around to see



Sue Snyder

what had happened and make sure she was okay. Sue had no apparent injuries, and at this point, we all noticed the crescent shaped bite mark at the tail of her board.

“According to Sue and others in the water, this is the scenario that we pieced together. Sue said she felt her board get bumped, but not violently, as she was sitting waiting for a wave. The force of the ‘bump’ knocked her off the board. As she fell off, her arm ran along the length of the shark as it swam by her. At this point she began kicking the shark before jumping back on her board and paddling to shore. One of the witnesses in the water turned when he heard Sue scream and saw the dorsal fin and tail of the shark splashing around the board before it submerged under water. The shark’s dorsal fin was about 18" to 22" in length. The shark wasn't spotted again by any of us.”

INJURY: No injury

DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD: “After examining the bite mark on the board, we determined that the radius is approximately 16", although we don't know if this is the full radius. We noticed that the shark hit Sue's center fin as it tried to bite due to the fact that there were a couple of gouges and a scrape mark running down the fin, with teeth fragments left in the fin box. You'll also notice in the pictures that some of the bite marks punctured all the way through her board. The most fortunate part of the experience was that Sue was sitting on her board at the time of the attack. Thus, the shark did not make contact with any part of her when it bit, leaving her uninjured. We have a pretty close community of surfers here who do a good job of looking out for each other in the water, even when people are surfing solo. This was a great example where those in the water pulled together to keep each other calm and help one another. Bottom line: We know sharks are out there, and we're glad Sue (or anyone else) was not hurt in the attack.”

SPECIES: The incident involved a white shark 14 to 15 feet in length and weighing about 3,000 pounds, confirmed by tooth fragments recovered and bite pattern and measurements in the surfboard.

SOURCES: Scott T. Paynton; http://www.surflines.com/surfnews/article_bamp.cfm?id=11376

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier



Scott T. Paynton

The bite on the board is 16" in diameter.